

Responses to Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee Questions
Re: AEC Proposal # 23 – BSAI P. cod

Allocations of P. cod in the BS and AI would be allocated to sectors according to the NPFMC decision to be made under the trailing portion of Amendment 85, Part II. The split of the BS and AI P. cod ABC would be based on recommendations from the Plan Team and SSC. Accounting of the seasonal apportionments of P. cod would continue at the aggregate BSAI wide level.

Proposal #23 and SSLMC “Objectives Questions”

1. Continue to avoid jeopardy and adverse modification.

- Is there additional fishing effort inside of SSL critical habitat?

No.

- Does the proposal provide trade-offs that reduce the total negative effects to SSL?

No.

- Does the proposal open a substantial amount of critical habitat?

No.

- Does proposal indirectly provide protection to additional sites?

No.

- Does proposal indirectly affect nearby SSL sites?

No..

- Does proposal affect important research site? (e.g. Chiswell)

No.

- Does proposal offer additional measures to control fishing rate or effort?

No.

- Does the proposal reduce the no-fishing time between end of year (December) and first of year (January) fisheries at a critical time for SSL?

No.

- Does the proposal affect the number of fishing days required to harvest the quota?

No.

2. Encourage development of a sound experimental design for monitoring.

No experimental design is included.

3. Minimize adverse social and economic impacts.

- Does the proposal provide economic benefits?

Yes, depending on the alternative chosen under Part II of Amendment 85.

If the BS and AI P. cod TAC are eventually split, under the default assumption all sub-sector allocations of P. cod will be split pro-rata between the BS and AI, severely disrupting where these sub-sectors currently fish. If the Council resumes work on Part II of Amendment 85, they can choose an alternative that would be less disruptive.

In the Council's consideration of Amendment 85 Part II, it became apparent that it was uncertain whether apportioning the P. cod TAC between BS and AI raised issues that needed to be covered in a Section 7 consultation. It is important to know what latitude the Council has in working through this issue.

If the Council does not take action under Part II of Amendment 85 and if the BS and AI P. cod TAC is split, under the 'default' assumption more of the trawl allocation would be taken in the BS and halibut bycatch would increase accordingly. This would constrain the total amount of P. cod and/or yellowfin sole that could be harvested by trawl vessels.

- What is the impact upon harvesting and/or processing efficiency?

This will depend on the alternative chosen under Part II of Amendment 85.

- Does the proposal have any effects on other fisheries?

This will depend on the alternative chosen under Part II of Amendment 85. If the Council does not take action under Part II of Amendment 85 and if the BS and AI P. cod TAC is split, under the 'default' assumption more of the trawl allocation would be taken in the BS and halibut bycatch would increase accordingly. This would constrain the total amount of P. cod and/or yellowfin sole that could be harvested by trawl vessels.

- Will the proposed action be further affected by recent or pending council actions?

Yes. The Council is scheduled to review the BSAI P. cod area apportionment issue at the February 2008 meeting.

4. Minimize bycatch of PSC and other groundfish.

- Does the proposal potentially create bycatch issues in other SSL prey species?
- Does the proposal potentially create bycatch issues in PSC species?

Yes. To the extent that more of the BSAI trawl harvest occurs in the AI, Halibut bycatch is an order of magnitude lower than in the BS. Under the 'default' assumption, if the BS and AI P. cod

TAC is split, more of the trawl allocation would be taken in the BS and halibut bycatch would increase accordingly.

5. Promote safety at sea.

- Does the proposal reduce or increase safety for the fleet?

No.

6. Minimize adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species in the BSAI and GOA

No changes to impacts on any other endangered species are anticipated.